SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN: Sir, the hon. Member is an expert in space technology, and, I think, his contribution to the space technology is undoubtedly very great. He is absolutely right, Sir. We are working in so many different areas as to give the benefits of space technology to society and for the socio-economic development of the country. It comes out of the remote sensing of the land mass, and communication satellites, particularly, for tele education with the EDUSAT, and also with the tele medicine project which is going on. We are reaching the remotest hospitals with the specialised institutions in the world. The remote sensing, where we are tapping the data is used almost in every Department of the Government of India. It is utilising the cartographic data and the remote sensing data that we are giving. We are now setting up a number of village resource centres. An outstanding work has been done by the Dr. Swaminathan Foundation. These village resource centres will be spread all over the country. We have a plan to set up a hundred in the initial stage, and we want to take it up further. These village resource centres will link the users, through the space technology, to the data that is available with the Government agencies. This is a very ambitious programme that we want to take up in the days to come.

Outsourcing services in the process of issue of visas

*264. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the services in the process of issue of visas in some countries have been outsourced in view of huge demand;

(b) if so, the countries and the type of service outsourced for the purpose;

(c) the other countries where a similar action is proposed to be taken;

(d) whether enough security considerations were taken into account before allowing outsourcing; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (e) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir. Some of services involved in the process of issuance of visas have been outsourced from the High Commission of India, Dhaka (Bangladesh).

(b) The consular services outsourced in Dhaka will be performed by the State Bank of India. The type of services outsourced include collection of visa applications, processing, data capture and transmission of applications and the data to the High Commission of India, Dhaka.

(c) The Government is considering a proposal for a pilot outsourcing project for visa applications in London and only if that proves successful, will that be replicated elsewhere.

(d) and (e) All necessary precautions especially from security aspects were taken into consideration before taking a decision on outsourcing of services in Dhaka. The responsibility of checking of Black List, printing, pasting and signing of visa stickers continues to rest with the High Commission of India, Dhaka.

DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Sir, before I put the question, the House should congratulate Dr. Kasturirangan for his outstanding contribution.

Sir, the answer which the hon. Prime Minister has given is satisfactory, but still, I want to seek some clarifications. Sir, by virtue of outsourcing the issuance of visas from the High Commission of India, Dhaka, Bangladesh, and since everyday thousands of visas are being issued, so. I would like to know what security precautions have been taken. This is part (a) of my question. Part (b) of my question is: how many visas have been issued during the last three years by the High Commissioner of India, Dhaka?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, this outsourcing itself was, in view of the security precaution, because the long queue in a serpentine manner creates a lot of security problem; that is why, outsourcing has been given to the SDI. Sir, I don't have the figures of the last three years, but I do have these figures. In the year 2003, 4,01,610 Bangladesh visas were issued and 3,49,221 visas were issued in 2004. If the hon. Member wants to have the figures of the previous years, I can give him those figures also.

DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: My second supplementary is, since you are going to outsource visas in London also, which is the agency you have identified for this purpose?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, so far, we have not identified any agency. As a matter of fact, the Government proposes to have a pilot outsourcing project for collection of visa applications in London. Advertisements have been inserted in the UK papers for the expression of interest by the firm, with at least one year experience in handling the visa application. The firm will also have to set up an office at the predesignated place of the UK to handle visa application forms. So, it is yet to come.

SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Sir, there are reports in many European countries that not enough visas are being issued to the tourists who want to come to India. In fact, it is one-tenth of the required visas. So, what is the Government planning to change the situation? A lot of countries have outsourced their visas to India and outside. What steps are we taking to see that visas are issued in Europe? Similarly, Sir, in Pakistan, the number of personnel is very less in Islamabad Embassy. People are facing great difficulties in getting visas. So, there also, can you think of a very secured way of outsourcing visas?

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, the hon. Member has put two questions. The one is about Europe. Sir, in Europe, visas are being issued taking into account certain categories. I would like to inform the hon. Member, of late, the number of applications seeking Indian visas has increased sharply. In the year 2003, the number of applications was 11,48,191. In the year 2004, the number was 12,25,690. But, as a matter of fact, we find a lot of problem in the cities like New York, in New York in the year 2004, we had 82,920 applications. In Houston and Chicago also, we have some applications. We have another problem also. In Singapore, we have 56,620 applications a year. These are the countries. Of course, we will have to do it in a phased manner, taking into account the necessity and also security considerations. The other countries, of course, the USA, the UK and Australia, have been outsourcing these services to India. This will be done after taking into account the necessity, but there is no restriction for issuing the visas unless there is some security concern and some other problems. That is all.

SHRI LALIT SURI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, with the increase of tourism and the inbound traffic coming from various countries, we are facing

immense visa problems all over the country. I would like to ask the hon. Minister—we had discussed this earlier also--whether there is any proposal to ease out the situation to have visa on arrival.

SHRI E. AHAMMED: Sir, this matter is under consideration. I will not be able to say that a decision has been taken. That is also one of the proposals. But, every time when we discuss about issuing of visas, security concerns should also be taken into account. And, hon. Member, Shri Shahid Siddiqui, also mentioned about Islamabad, but it will be taken up only in a reciprocal manner. We must also have the local Government's assistance and permission. So, easing out the process of issuing visas for the tourists is also under consideration to promote tourism in this country.

पूर्वोत्तर क्षेत्र के युवाओं में खेल क्षमता

*265. श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज: क्या युवक कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों के बालक तथा बालिकाओं में अच्छा खिलाड़ी बनने की क्षमता मौजूद है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या उस क्षेत्र में खेल क्षमता का विकास करने के लिए वहां एक खेल अकादमी स्थापित करने संबंधी कोई योजना विचाराधीन है;

(ग) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(घ) यदि नहीं, तो इसके क्या कारण हैं?

युवक कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्री (श्री मणि शंकर अय्यर): (क) से (घ) एक विवरण सभा पटल पर रख दिया गया है।

विवरण

(क) जी, हां। पूर्वोत्तर क्षेत्र के बालक और बालिकाओं में अच्छे खिलाड़ियों के बनने की क्षमता असंदिग्ध है।

(ख) और (ग) राज्य खेल अकादमियों के प्रायोजकों के लिए अनुदान देने की भारत सरकार की एक योजना है। योजना का प्रमुख लक्ष्य 10 से 13 वर्ष के आयु समूह में खेलों में उपलब्ध सर्वश्रेष्ठ प्रतिभा, 10 से 18 वर्ष के आयु समूह में राज्य/राष्ट्रीय प्रतियोगिता में चोटी का प्रदर्शन करने वाले खिलाड़ियों का चयन तथा आगामी वर्षों में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर देश के लिए पदक जीतने के लिए उन्हें तैयार तथा विकसित करना है।